STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

STOCKPORT LIVE WELL

NHS Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

BEST START IN LIFE

Funded by UK Government

# ONESTOCKPORT Family Hubs

## Start Well, Live Well and Thrive

Working together with communities to support children, young people and families.

# Best Start in Life Delivery Plan 2026 - 2029

## Executive Summary

Stockport's early years system is committed to giving every child the best possible start in life, from pregnancy through to starting school. Many children thrive, supported by strong families, skilled practitioners and an increasingly integrated Start Well and Family Hubs neighbourhood model. Overall outcomes remain comparatively strong. However, persistent inequalities continue to affect too many children, particularly boys, those children growing up in poverty, those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), and children with emerging or identified special educational needs. These gaps are not about children's potential; they reflect unequal early experiences, access to support and wider pressures on families.

Through delivery of the Start Well Strategy (2024–2027), Stockport has strengthened early identification, improved access to early education and childcare, and deepened integration across health, early years education and family support. Ongoing reflection during this process has shown clear progress and that early gains are not always fully sustained as children approach school entry, particularly for those experiencing the greatest disadvantage.

The Best Start in Life (BSiL) Plan 2026–2029 sets out a focused and deliberate phase of delivery for children aged three and four. This stage represents a critical opportunity to consolidate earlier progress and reduce inequalities before children start school. By age three, differences in communication, emotional regulation, independence and learning behaviours are already visible, yet children remain highly responsive to timely, relational and well-coordinated support.

The BSiL Plan does not replace or change the vision or outcomes of the Start Well Strategy. Instead, it strengthens how those outcomes are delivered in the preschool years by sharpening priorities, clarifying expectations and improving system alignment at a key transition point before children start school. The Plan focuses delivery on the areas shown locally and nationally to have the greatest impact on school readiness and the Good Level of Development (GLD), including parenting support and the home learning environment, high-quality early education and childcare, early identification of need and inclusion, SEND pathways, and smooth transitions into nursery and Reception.

Progress will be reviewed annually against statutory GLD targets, priority cohort outcomes and delivery expectations. Learning from data, evaluation, family feedback and workforce insight will be used to refine and strengthen delivery over time, ensuring the Plan remains responsive to emerging need, local and regional learning, and national policy direction.

While the Local Authority holds responsibility for coordinating, assuring and reporting on delivery, improving school readiness and reducing inequalities is a shared whole-system responsibility. The Plan is delivered through collective action across early years providers, schools, health services, SEND/inclusion teams, early help, wider partners, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) partners,

and neighbourhood leadership, working alongside families. It aligns with the Families First Partnership Programme and sits within Stockport's wider Live Well approach, reinforcing a place-based focus on prevention, Early Help and reducing inequalities, with the early years recognised as a critical foundation for lifelong outcomes.

## Audience and Accessibility

This document is a strategic delivery plan intended for system leaders, partners and national accountability. It sets out priorities, expectations and governance arrangements for improving school readiness and reducing inequalities in Stockport. While the Plan is published to meet transparency requirements, it is not designed as a family-facing narrative document. A shorter, accessible summary will be published alongside this Plan to support wider public understanding of what this means for families and communities.

# 1. Purpose and Scope of the Plan

The BSiL Plan 2026–2029 provides a focused delivery framework for improving school readiness and reducing inequalities for children aged three and four in Stockport.

The Plan is firmly grounded in the Start Well Strategy (2024–2027) and supports delivery of its vision and outcomes. It does not replace or revise the Start Well Strategy. Instead, it clarifies priorities, expectations and system alignment for the preschool years, strengthening delivery at a key transition point before children start school.

The Plan applies across the early years system and is intended to guide coordinated action by health, early years, education, SEND, Early Help and community partners. It aligns with national Best Start in Life policy, statutory school readiness expectations and local Family Hubs delivery.

When the Start Well Strategy is refreshed in 2027, the BSiL Plan will continue to inform how the system works together to deliver improved outcomes for children and families.

# 2. Relationship to the Start Well Strategy and Outcomes

The BSiL Plan 2026–2029 is an integral part of Stockport's Start Well Strategy (2024–2027). Start Well sets the outcomes the system is collectively working to achieve from pregnancy to age five. This Plan strengthens delivery of those outcomes in the preschool years by focusing more deliberately on children aged three and four at a key transition point before starting school.

## Contribution to Start Well Outcomes

Through this focused phase of delivery, the Plan contributes directly to the Start Well outcomes, by ensuring that children aged three and four:

- Experience loving, nurturing and responsive relationships, recognising the central role of parents, carers and trusted adults in shaping children's emotional wellbeing, communication and confidence

- Are supported to live in safe, stable environments, with Early Help that reduces stress, builds routines and prevents difficulties from escalating
- Have strong early development, particularly in communication, emotional regulation, independence and learning behaviours that underpin school readiness
- Are supported alongside their parents and carers to have good physical and mental health and access to timely support, through coordinated health, early years and family help pathways

By strengthening delivery against these outcomes during the preschool years, the Plan helps ensure the foundations laid in pregnancy and the first 1001 days are sustained and built upon as children approach Reception.

## A Focused Phase of Delivery

Local learning shows that while early differences are already visible by age three, children remain highly responsive to timely, relational and coordinated support. This Plan reflects this learning by intensifying coordination, consistency and clarity across the system during the years immediately before starting school.

The focus on ages three and four does not replace or diminish earlier intervention. Instead, it builds on the foundations laid through Start Well by concentrating effort on the core levers shown locally and nationally to have the greatest influence on school readiness and GLD. These include strengthening parenting support and the home learning environment, ensuring consistent high-quality early education and childcare, embedding SEND pathways, and enabling smooth transitions into nursery and Reception.

In this way, the BSiL Plan strengthens Start Well delivery rather than duplicating it, ensuring Stockport's early years system remains aligned, coherent, purposeful in supporting more children to start school confident, resilient and ready to learn.

**Start Well Strategy 2024 to 2027**

# 3. Case for Action: Why Focus on Ages 3–4 Now

Stockport has made sustained progress in strengthening its early years system through the Start Well Strategy, supported by strong partnership working, consistently high-quality early education and childcare, and a long-standing commitment to evidence-informed practice. Overall outcomes remain comparatively strong. However, it has been well understood for many years that headline performance masks deep and persistent inequalities, particularly for boys, children growing up in poverty and children with SEND. Addressing these inequalities has been an enduring priority for the local system.

Continued delivery experience, local data and evaluation have reinforced understanding of where and how these inequalities become entrenched. Evidence shows that without sustained and coordinated focus in the years immediately before school entry, early progress made earlier in childhood is not always fully consolidated.

The preschool years therefore represent a critical point at which long-standing inequalities can either be reduced or reinforced.

Local deep dive analysis (Feb 2026) shows that children who do not achieve GLD are more likely to experience overlapping and cumulative vulnerabilities rather than a single driver of need. This is particularly evident for boys growing up in deprivation, where socio-economic disadvantage, emerging or identified special educational needs, and delayed speech, language and communication development frequently coincide. These factors interact and reinforce one another over time, increasing the likelihood that boys start school already behind their peers. Within the Early Years Foundation Stage, literacy is most frequently the area not yet met, reflecting these underlying and intersecting challenges rather than literacy in isolation.

Strong early identification is a clear and established strength of the local system. However, long-standing learning from local data, practitioner insight and external evaluation shows that identification alone is not sufficient to close gaps. Where early differences are not followed by sustained, coordinated and developmentally appropriate support through the preschool years, they are more likely to persist and become harder to address by the time children enter Reception.

Reducing inequalities at this stage depends not only on increased support and intervention, but on the consistent use of evidence-based approaches that are known to improve the prime areas of learning, especially communication and emotional regulation, school readiness and parenting and parent–child relationships when delivered well. Without this focus, additional activity risks being fragmented and insufficient to shift entrenched patterns of disadvantage.

Practitioners consistently emphasise the importance of strong relationships with families, play-based learning and well-planned transitions. Families tell us they want clear, practical guidance on child development, routines and independence, alongside support that is easy to access locally and feels joined-up. Taken together, this reinforces that ages three and four represent a decisive window: inequalities are already visible, but children remain highly responsive to timely, relational and evidence-based support.

This evidence underlines the need for a deliberate, targeted and coordinated phase of delivery focused on ages three and four. Strengthening support during this period is essential to sustaining earlier progress, preventing long-standing inequalities from becoming embedded at school entry, and ensuring more children start school confident, resilient and ready to learn.

# 4. National Context and Statutory Expectations

## Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life – National Policy

In July 2025, the government published Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life, a joint strategy led by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). The strategy sets out a cross-government commitment to improve child development and reduce inequalities from pregnancy through to age five. It emphasises the importance of strong parenting and family relationships, early identification of need, high-quality early education and childcare, and integrated delivery across health, education and family support services.

This national direction closely aligns with Stockport's Start Well Strategy and reinforces the importance of place-based, integrated approaches to early years delivery, with a particular focus on improving school readiness and reducing inequalities before children start school.

## Statutory School Readiness Targets and Local Authority Accountability

As part of the national Best Start in Life strategy, statutory school readiness targets have been introduced for every local authority, strengthening accountability for improving outcomes and narrowing inequalities.
For Stockport, the statutory targets for 2028 are:

- **77.7% of children achieving a GLD overall**
- **52.3% of children eligible for FSM achieving a GLD**

Meeting these targets will require approximately **318 additional children** in Stockport to achieve a GLD by 2028, including **38 additional children eligible for FSM**. Progress will be monitored through Early Years Foundation Stage Profile outcomes and wider local performance frameworks, with a clear expectation that local authorities demonstrate targeted action to improve outcomes for children growing up in poverty, boys, children with SEND and those living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

## Alignment with Health, Early Help and Children's Social Care Reform

The Best Start in Life strategy is explicitly cross-government and closely aligned with health, Early Help and children's social care reform. It strengthens the role of the Healthy Child Programme in early identification, developmental review and timely intervention, and reinforces the importance of coordinated parenting and family support across the system.

This approach is consistent with the NHS Long Term Plan and the Families First Partnership Programme, both of which prioritise prevention, reducing inequalities and integrated, neighbourhood-based delivery. Family Hubs are identified nationally as a key mechanism for reform, bringing together health, education, parenting, Early Help and children's social care into a more accessible and coordinated system of support for families.

## What This Means for Stockport

For Stockport, this national policy reinforces the need for a focused and coordinated phase of delivery in the preschool years, particularly for children aged three and four. The BSiL Plan sets out how the local system will strengthen delivery at a stage where early differences are already visible but remain responsive to timely, coordinated support.

This includes prioritising children and families experiencing the greatest inequalities, strengthening integration across parenting support, early education, health and family help through the Family Hubs neighbourhood model, and using data, practitioner insight and family voice to focus effort where it will have the greatest impact on school readiness and GLD outcomes. In doing so, the Plan responds directly to national statutory expectations by setting out how Stockport will sustain early progress and reduce inequalities before children start school.

# 5. Stockport's Population Needs and Inequalities

## Overall Picture

Stockport's educational outcomes in the early years are broadly in line with the national picture and above the regional Greater Manchester average with **68% of children achieving a GLD** at the end of Reception. This reflects a combination of sustained investment across the early years system, including strong integration between midwifery and health visiting, delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, high take-up of funded early education entitlements, consistently good quality across early education and childcare provision, and the role of schools in supporting children's development and transition into Reception.

However, headline performance masks significant and persistent inequalities. Progress is uneven across communities and cohorts, and too many children begin school already behind. These gaps are not about children's potential; they reflect unequal early experiences, access to support and wider pressures on families.

## Where Inequalities Persist

**Local data (2025) highlights clear and entrenched gaps in school readiness outcomes:**

- **Only 43.9% of children eligible for FSM achieve a GLD**
- **Girls outperform boys**, with 52.9% of girls achieving a GLD compared to 34.2% of boys
- **Children with SEND** are significantly less likely to achieve a GLD (22.9%)
- **Children living in the most deprived neighbourhoods** experience the widest developmental gaps
- **Speech, language and communication needs** remain the most common area of concern

These inequalities are evident across the borough but are most concentrated in neighbourhoods experiencing higher levels of deprivation.

## Early Development: Gaps Visible by Age Two

Differences in development are evident well before children reach school age. At the two-year development review, Stockport identifies higher levels of developmental need than national comparators, reflecting a deliberate local approach to early identification.

**Data (2025) shows that:**

- Gender gaps are already visible by age two, particularly in communication
- Boys are less likely than girls to meet expected development
- Take-up of funded early education at age two is high, indicating strong access to provision

Early identification is a clear strength of the local system. However, learning from local data and practice shows that identification alone is not sufficient. Without sustained, evidence-based intervention and coordinated support through the preschool years, early differences persist and are carried into Reception

## Wider Factors Shaping Children's Early Experiences

Alongside developmental outcomes, wider indicators provide important context for children's early lives in Stockport. There are positive trends in early health, including rising breastfeeding rates, reductions in smoking during pregnancy and levels of overweight and obesity at age 4 - 5 remaining below the national average.
At the same time, families report increasing pressures linked to the cost of living, stress, isolation, inconsistent routines and higher screen use. These pressures directly influence the home learning environment and affect children's communication, emotional regulation and independence skills as they approach school age.

## System Reach, Engagement and Capacity

Stockport has a number of established system strengths that provide a strong foundation for improvement. Delivery of the Healthy Child Programme is consistently strong, with high coverage of timely mandated contacts and early identification of developmental need. The Family Hubs neighbourhood model is increasingly providing a trusted and accessible route into support, with growing digital engagement alongside face-to-face and outreach delivery.

Stockport's parenting offer continues to expand, combining group-based delivery with a strong digital platform. Early education and childcare quality remains a key strength, with high take-up of funded entitlements. However, workforce recruitment and retention pressures and increasing complexity of need mean that some providers operate below registered capacity, creating localised pressure in certain neighbourhoods.

## What This Tells Us

Taken together, this evidence shows that Stockport does not start from a position of deficit. The borough has strong infrastructure, high-quality provision and growing engagement with families.
The challenge is not a lack of services or early identification, but how existing assets are best aligned, targeted and strengthened for children at greatest risk of starting school working below age-related expectations. Without a sharpened focus in the preschool years, inequalities evident by age two persist into Reception and, for some, widen over time.

This reinforces the case for a focused phase of delivery that targets priority cohorts and neighbourhoods, strengthens the pathways that support children as they start school, and ensures early progress is sustained for those who need it most.

# 6. Delivery Framework - Strengthening Support for Children and Families

## Overview

This Delivery Framework sets out how Stockport will enhance and sharpen delivery across the early years system, with a particular focus on children aged three and four, while protecting and strengthening the foundations laid from pregnancy and the first two years of life.

Delivery builds on Stockport's established Start Well Strategy and Family Hubs neighbourhood model and aligns with national Best Start in Life, SEND and Families First reform. It responds directly to local learning that, while early identification is strong, outcomes for children at the greatest risk of starting school without the relevant skills and knowledge in place depend on sustained, coordinated and high-quality evidence-based support through the preschool years.

The framework does not introduce new services or a new system. Instead, it focuses on using existing strengths more deliberately and consistently, bringing greater clarity, alignment and intensity to delivery where it can have the greatest impact on school readiness and reducing inequalities before children start school.

Delivery is organised around a set of interconnected strands that reflect the evidence on what matters most for children's development and school readiness. Together, these strands strengthen support for families, improve inclusion and quality in early education and childcare, ensure earlier and more coordinated responses to emerging need, and support smooth transitions into nursery and Reception.

Delivery of the Plan relies on collective contribution of health services, early years providers, schools, family help, the VCFSE sector and neighbourhood partners, maximising the full range of assets within communities to improve reach and impact.

## Shared Delivery Principles

**Across all strands, delivery is underpinned by shared principles:**

- Early, relational and preventative support, building strong relationships with families and intervening before difficulties escalate
- Targeted action for children and communities experiencing the greatest inequality, including boys, children growing up in poverty and children with SEND
- Integrated, neighbourhood-based delivery through Family Hub Networks, ensuring support is accessible, joined up and locally responsive
- Consistent use of evidence-based approaches, delivered with quality and fidelity to improve outcomes for children and families

These shared principles are grounded in a strong understanding of how early adversity shapes children's development and school readiness. Evidence consistently shows that cumulative social and economic adversity increases the risk of difficulties in early relationships, which in turn affect children's emotional regulation, communication and readiness to learn. This underlines the importance of strengthening parent–infant relationships alongside wider early learning and development support across all delivery strands.

## A. Healthy Babies and Strong Foundations (Pregnancy to Age Two)

Strong foundations in pregnancy and the first two years of life are critical to children's later development and school readiness. Local learning from Start Well delivery, Scrutiny findings and national evidence shows that secure early relationships, parental wellbeing and early identification of need in the first years of life shape outcomes throughout the preschool period.

Stockport has established strengths in this area, including sustained investment in antenatal support, high coverage of the Healthy Child Programme, an embedded Enhanced Maternity Pathway that strengthens integrated working between midwives and health visitors, targeted support for teenage and young parents through the Family Nurse Partnership, and delivery through Family Hubs and community partners.

This includes continued investment in Parent Infant Mental Health, strengthening both direct support for vulnerable babies and families and indirect system capacity through workforce training, pathway development and integrated practice. Maintaining strong connections between antenatal, perinatal, early years, Early Help and SEND pathways ensures that emerging needs to be identified early and supported consistency through the first 1,001 days of life.

**Delivery will focus on:**

- Sustaining investment in antenatal support and the first 1,001 days of life
- Continuing to embed and deepen the Enhanced Maternity Pathway
- Strengthening targeted health visiting and Early Help pathways in neighbourhoods experiencing the highest levels of disadvantage
- Extending the Family Nurse Partnership offer for teenage and young parents
- Continuing to commission and develop the enhanced Dad Matters offer
- Working with the VCFSE sector to strengthen community-based, peer-led and culturally responsive support

**What success will look like:**

- Strong engagement with families from pregnancy onwards
- Sustained earlier identification of emerging needs and more timely support
- Improved parental knowledge, confidence, wellbeing and early relationships
- Stronger foundations for children entering the preschool years

## B. Parenting Support and the Home Learning Environment

Differences in communication, emotional regulation, independence and learning behaviours are already visible by age three and are strongly shaped by children's early relationships, routines and experiences at home. Families consistently tell us they want practical, accessible support to understand child development, manage behaviour and support learning in everyday ways.

Stockport has a strong, evidence-informed parenting offer and growing digital platform. Learning shows this offer is trusted and effective, but that reach, consistency and alignment can be strengthened for families with three- and four-year-olds, particularly in priority neighbourhoods.

Speech, language and communication is a clear priority within the Best Start in Life Plan, building on the foundations of strong early relationships. Stockport's speech and language transformation work is focussed upon embedding the relevant support to develop communications skills across universal, targeted and specialist provision, rather than delivered in isolation.

**Delivery will focus on:**

- Scaling up evidence-based parenting and home learning environment interventions for families with 3- and 4-year-olds
- Strengthening practical, consistent messaging around chatting, playing, reading, routines and independence
- Working with partners, including libraries and the National Literacy Trust, to strengthen a community approach to early literacy
- Using Family Hubs as the primary delivery route, combining group-based, outreach and digital support
- Improving professional confidence and consistency through shared tools and aligned messaging

**What success will look like:**

- Increased engagement and completion of parenting support among priority families
- Improved parental knowledge, confidence and capability
- Stronger parent–child interactions that support communication, regulation and early learning

## C. Early Education and Childcare Access, Inclusion and Quality

High-quality early education and childcare is a core strength in Stockport and plays a vital role in supporting development and school readiness. Take-up of funded entitlements is high and quality remains strong. However, workforce pressures and increasing complexity of need create challenges for access, inclusion and capacity in some neighbourhoods.

Children growing up in poverty, boys and children with SEND are more likely to need additional support to thrive. Ensuring access to inclusive, high-quality provision is therefore central to reducing inequalities.

**Delivery will focus on:**

- Increasing participation in early education and childcare in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- Strengthening information-sharing between Start Well services and early years providers
- Targeting support for settings with higher numbers of vulnerable children
- Addressing sufficiency and workforce pressures using local intelligence
- Promoting funded entitlements and strengthening take-up among disadvantaged families
- Supporting inclusive practice through coordinated SEND, health, early years and family help advice

**What success will look like:**

- Sustained take-up of early education entitlements among disadvantaged groups
- More consistent inclusive practice across early years settings
- Stronger partnership working across sectors

## D. Transitions into Nursery and Reception

Transitions into nursery and Reception are a critical point for children and families, particularly those with emerging needs. Poorly coordinated transitions risk undermining early gains and increasing anxiety for children and parents.

Local learning highlights variability in the quality and consistency of transition planning, reinforcing the need for clearer expectations and stronger multi-agency coordination.

**Delivery will focus on:**

- Developing communities of practice in priority neighbourhoods, focussed upon transition
- Clear local expectations for transition planning and information-sharing
- Ensuring transition planning is embedded within existing Early Help, SEND and Best Practice Pathways

**What success will look like:**

- Children feeling settled and confident as they enter nursery or school
- Improved confidence among parents and practitioners
- Better continuity and coordination of support across services

## E. Targeted Support and Early Identification

While early identification is a strength in Stockport, learning shows that identification must be followed by timely, coordinated and proportionate support to prevent inequalities from widening. Children experiencing poverty, family stress or emerging developmental needs benefit most from early, joined-up intervention.

**Delivery will focus on:**

- Strengthening Best Practice Pathways for children aged 2–5
- Using Team Around the Early Years (TAEY) as the core coordination mechanism for emerging need
- Improving clarity and use of Early Help pathways

- Embedding consideration of early child development and family financial resilience within multi-agency planning for families with young children
- Using neighbourhood-level insight to proactively identify children who are not yet 'school ready' when they start

**What success will look like:**

- Earlier and more effective support for children with emerging needs
- Improved coordination and reduced escalation into statutory services

## F. SEND – Strengthening Early Years Pathways (Ages 2–5)

Children with SEND are significantly less likely to achieve a GLD. National SEND reform and local learning highlight the importance of earlier identification, clearer pathways and stronger coordination in the preschool years.

Stockport has strengthened SEND pathways for children aged 2–5 by extending Portage support to school entry, ensuring continuity of support for children with more complex needs, alongside inclusive practice within provision.

**Delivery will focus on:**

- Strengthening early years SEND coordination through Family Hubs
- Using TAEY as the core coordination mechanism for emerging SEND
- Embedding Best Practice Pathways aligned with national SEND reform
- Improving communication with families about pathways, support and next steps

**What success will look like:**

- Earlier identification and more timely support.
- Improved family experience and clarity of pathways.
- Reduced delays and escalation into crisis or statutory intervention.

Taken together, the delivery strands set out above describe how the system will work differently to improve school readiness and reduce inequalities in the preschool years. It is equally important to be clear about what these changes mean in practice for families, and how they should be experienced by parents and carers.

## What This Will Mean for Families

**For parents and carers, this Plan is intended to mean that support feels earlier, clearer and more joined-up. Families should experience:**

- Earlier conversations about their child's development, with support offered before difficulties escalate

- Clearer information about what support is available locally and how to access it
- Fewer hand-offs between services and less repetition of their story
- More consistent advice and support across health, early years providers, family help and schools
- Better planned transitions into nursery and Reception, particularly for children with emerging or additional needs

Overall, this approach aims to reduce stress for families, build confidence in parenting, and ensure more children start school feeling secure, supported and ready to learn.

# 7. System Enablers, Governance and Assurance

Delivering the BSiL Plan requires a system that is coordinated, skilled, data-informed and accountable. The system enablers set out below ensure that delivery is experienced as a coherent, integrated approach, and that progress is tracked, learned from and strengthened over time.

## Data, Insight and Evidence-Informed Decision Making

High-quality data and insight are central to effective delivery. Learning from Stockport's work with national partners, including Foundations and Nesta, has reinforced the importance of using data not only to describe need, but to actively shape decision-making, service development and practice improvement.

**Through the BSiL Plan, Stockport will:**

- Use neighbourhood- and cohort-level data to identify priority groups and track progress over time, particularly for children eligible for FSM, boys and children with SEND
- Strengthen the link between data, professional judgement and lived experience, ensuring insight from families and practitioners informs how services are designed and delivered
- Use learning from data and evaluation to bridge the gap between what evidence tells us works and how it is implemented consistently in practice
- Establish a clear feedback loop with Early Years providers so they understand collectively how the support and interventions they have provided contribute to GLD at the end of Reception

This approach supports sharper prioritisation, more targeted use of resources and a clearer understanding of impact.

## Co-production, Participation and Lived Experience

The BSiL Plan has been shaped by learning from delivery, local data, external evaluation, and the lived experience of families and the early years workforce. Practitioner insight and family voice have been central in identifying where the system is working well, where inequalities persist, and where sharper focus is now needed to improve outcomes for children aged three and four.

Co-production is not treated as a one-off consultation exercise. It is an ongoing way of working that strengthens delivery by ensuring services remain grounded in the realities of family life, professional practice and neighbourhood context. Family and workforce insight will continue to inform service design, delivery refinement and prioritisation, alongside data and evidence.

Through the delivery of this Plan, Stockport will continue to embed participation and lived experience within neighbourhood-based delivery through Family Hub Networks. Family and workforce insight will inform service design, delivery refinement and prioritisation, alongside data and evidence. Feedback will be actively used to strengthen implementation quality, address barriers to engagement and adapt approaches where impact is not yet sufficient.

## Evidence-Based Approaches and Implementation Quality

The Plan places a strong emphasis on the consistent use of evidence-based approaches, alongside learning about the importance of implementation quality and fidelity. Evidence shows that even well-designed interventions will not achieve impact if they are implemented inconsistently or without sufficient support for the workforce.

**Delivery will therefore focus on:**

- Selecting approaches with a strong evidence base for improving early development, parenting and school readiness
- Supporting consistent implementation across neighbourhoods and services, while allowing proportionate adaptation to local context
- Monitoring reach, engagement and fidelity alongside outcomes, using this information to inform continuous improvement

## Workforce Capacity and Capability

A skilled, confident and supported workforce is essential to delivering the ambitions set out in this Plan. Increasing complexity of need, SEND reform and a sharper focus on the preschool years require continued investment in workforce capability across the system.

**Stockport will:**

- Align workforce development across the early years system and beyond to support shared language, expectations and ways of working
- Build confidence in delivering evidence-based parenting, Home Learning Environment and inclusive practice approaches
- Strengthen understanding and consistent use of Best Practice Pathways and Team Around the Early Years as core coordination mechanisms

## Family Hub Networks as the Neighbourhood Delivery Model

Family Hub Networks are Stockport's neighbourhood delivery model for the Best Start in Life Plan. They are not a single building or service, but a connected network of support that brings together services, places, people and access routes to ensure families experience help as accessible, trusted and joined-up.

VCFSE partners play a key role in Family Hub Networks, providing trusted, everyday support in communities and extending reach to families who may be less likely to engage in public sector and statutory services.

**Family Hub Networks operate through:**

- **Services** – universal and targeted support across health, early years, parenting, SEND and Early Help
- **Places** – Family Hub sites, co-located teams, community settings and outreach venues
- **People** – practitioners, partners and community organisations working with shared values, language and approaches
- **Access routes** – physical access, proactive outreach and a strong digital front door

Through this networked approach, the BSiL Plan will provide clear and consistent access to support for families with young children, strengthen coordination at neighbourhood level, and support place-based working that responds to local need while maintaining system-wide consistency.

## Governance, Accountability and Review

Delivering the BSiL Plan requires clear ownership, strong partnership working and effective accountability across the early years and family support system. The Plan is delivered through Stockport's established early years governance arrangements, ensuring coherence with wider prevention and Early Help priorities.

Strategic ownership sits with the Start Well and School Readiness Board, which provides leadership, challenge and oversight of early years outcomes from pregnancy to starting school. Delivery is coordinated through themed workstreams that translate strategic priorities into operational action and support consistent implementation across the system.

Progress and delivery align with the Prevention and Early Help Board, ensuring coherence with Family Hub Networks delivery, neighbourhood multi-disciplinary team working and wider Early Help priorities. Integrated working with health partners is maintained through a clear line of sight into Stockport NHS Foundation Trust governance, supporting shared accountability for early years outcomes across the local system.

The Start Well Outcomes Framework will continue to provide the overarching framework for evidencing impact across Stockport's Start Well Strategy. Progress and performance against the BSiL Delivery Framework will be monitored alongside this framework, ensuring a clear line of sight between delivery activity, priority cohorts and neighbourhoods, and longer-term system outcomes.

Delivery will be strengthened through ongoing collaboration across Greater Manchester, enabling shared learning, additionality and alignment with wider system and regional reform.

## Annual Review and Continuous Improvement

The BSiL Plan is intended to be a live and adaptive delivery framework. Progress will be reviewed annually against outcomes, statutory targets and delivery expectations, with learning from data, evaluation and family feedback used to strengthen what is working and address areas where impact is not yet sufficient. As the Start Well Strategy reaches the end of its current cycle in 2027, learning from delivery of the BSiL Plan will inform the next phase of Stockport's early years strategic framework, ensuring continuity of vision and delivery from pregnancy to starting school.